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Published in:
Tourist Studies

DOI:
[10.1177/1468797619832308](https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797619832308)

Published: 01.09.2019

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for pulished version (APA):
Rantala, O., & Varley, P. (2019). Wild camping and the weight of tourism. *Tourist Studies*, 19(3), 295-312.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797619832308>



Wild camping and the weight of tourism

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Tourist Studies
1–18

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Abstract

Wild camping forms a specific social reality within which tourists often claim not to be tourists and within which the capitalist practices central to tourism are messy. Yet, wild camping exemplifies the core idea in tourism: engaging in time during which time is 'free'. Here the concern is with the ways in which we 'do' going camping. We take material interaction with space, place and things as a starting point, via ethnomethodologically informed ethnography, in focusing upon the deployment of mundane, taken-for-granted assumptions, knowledge and practices. We find urban nomads engaged in the clearing, freedom and escape of the outdoors (the lightness), but anchored by the materialities of doing everyday life work, weighted with responsibilities towards nature, things and people.

Keywords

camping, clearing, heaviness, lightness, materiality, rhythms

Tourism as camping

Introduction

Perhaps it may seem odd, in the early stages of the twenty-first century, to be writing about camping, a practice that has its origins in the mists and sandstorms of time, at the beginning of human activity on the planet – in a journal dedicated to the study of tourism. Surely tourism is glossy, clean, modern, organised and reliable, with any rough differences packaged and offered up as exotic cultural moments in an otherwise sun- or snow-sure luxurious wonderland? The apparent discomfort, cramped-ness, dampness,

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messy-work and creepy-crawliness of camping somehow does not obviously fit the bill as proper reward after months of hard labour under the capitalist yoke. As Germann Molz (2014) opines:

Camping confounds the imaginaries of indulgence and comfort that glisten from the pages of travel and lifestyle magazines. ... Instead of pampered luxury, however, *camping* embraces discomfort and lack – not so much as pleasures in and of themselves but as reminders that less is often more. (p. 19)

Yet, in many societies and among certain subgroups, camping has become an increasingly popular touristic pastime that requires deeper theorisation by tourism scholars. In this analysis, we aim to explore the philosophical resonance of *wild camping* – of a form of tourism in which tourists walk into the Great Outdoors carrying their gear on their backs and eventually finding places to pitch their tents ‘out there’, rather than in a designated campground. In doing so, we apply concepts such as clearing, lightness and heaviness as embodied, material aspects of the experience of journeying outdoors and living in a tent in Northern Europe. We will suggest that the lightness and heaviness emanate from a number of phenomena, such as the lightness of escape from the pressures and rigours of a structured, organised everyday, and the heaviness of our alienating dependence on technological innovation, the global marketplace or the weight of care for others while living off-grid, far from help. These tensions are bound up when we are attuned towards the relations between humans and more-than-human world – when we negotiate our engagement, and hold back, in our tent, our down sleeping bag, next to our gas-burning stove. There is thus an inherent messiness, incompleteness and non-tourism feel about wild camping, as if it might be a resistance to tourism in its overtly commodified form. Which makes it all the more fascinating. In our analysis, we first trace the history of wild camping; then we discuss the weightiness (lightness and heaviness), and clearing, and finally draw conclusions on how camping as a form of tourism expands our understanding of the troubled ways of being in the world.

We draw upon personal memories, experiences and accounts of camping from the past 50 years in Canada, Finland, Norway, Pakistan, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Recent experiences, purposively undertaken as fieldwork, have been recorded in detail, in an effort to capture the materiality of the strange, horizontal world of the lightweight wilderness camper, making place. Our camping accounts emanate largely from Northern Europe – countries with wide, wild, lightly populated expanses and temperate climates, rather than predictable sunshine and warm seas. Similar tales might also be told about camping in Canada, Australasia and other regions, but the focus on Northern European places has several aspects, which distinguish the region for camping (Hailey, 2009: 155). In particular the lack of risk from mega fauna (such as lions and bears), and (dangerous) insects and snakes in most of the region, making camping in Europe a low-risk leisure pursuit from this perspective. There is also the relative abundance of water, space and camp spots afforded by woodland and open upland areas further enhanced by various forms of public ‘right to roam’ policies – recent in the case of Scotland, ancient in the case of the Nordic countries.

And yet this puzzle remains: why do well-educated, wealthy members of industrialised societies choose to leave behind the hard-won spoils of civilisation, in order to sleep outdoors ‘protected’ by a thin layer of fabric stretched tautly over a few poles and held by some pegs hammered into the ground? The living space in these constructions (constrictions) seldom amounts to more than 2 m square. This seems at odds with the progressive civilising of everyday life, with its convenience, packagedness and comfort. It is in this endeavour that we therefore engage in a philosophical investigation of that peculiar tourism phenomenon, wild camping.

Literature review

To start with, early camping practices were not a means to recreation, leisure and touristic pleasure, but were ways to create shelter, to move (following hunted quarry, or seeking water and food), and to escape (from marauders, deteriorating environmental conditions). The history of camping (in tents) thus likely begins with nomadism, transhumance practices and the steady rhythmic round in pursuit of scarce and seasonal natural resources. Still earlier, and ‘camping’, or sleeping outdoors and in caves was simply how human beings lived among the spaces afforded in nature. It was neither tourism, nor leisure. Beyond prehistoric camping practices, later tented excursions and encampments have included military camps and crusades as well as refugees in tented settlements – housing escapees from economic, environmental or human disaster. More contemporary uses of the term might include: ‘...boot camps, migrant camps, protest camps, base camps, summer camps, trailer camps, nudist camps, peace camps, Gypsy camps, climate camps and so on. It’s almost more than one word can take’. (Germann Molz, 2014: 20; and see Hailey, 2009). Recently, tourism applications of tent-based temporary accommodation are distinctly celebratory, festival- and leisure-based. Jubilees, music festivals, fairs, mountain treks, expeditions, safaris and rallies all have aspects of camping and tented accommodation associated with them, in which the camping experience is a part of the benefit, or tourism pleasure.

Early tents were made from cloth woven from animal hairs, as in the Bedouin *bait sha’r* (house of hair), or the ready-to-hand animal skins and bones as favoured by the Inuit and other peoples in far Northern climes in particular (De Abaitua, 2011). Now, modern materials, honed by textile and engineering innovations from other industries are pressed into service to create the light, costly sleeping pods, which are the lightweight tents of today. For tourist studies, therefore, we refer to camping as a part and parcel of leisure and tourism practices, with wild camping defined as people exercising their freedom to have leisure and to roam, by heading out with their lightweight, hi-tech homes in their backpacks, into an imagined wilderness space. It is romanticised, privileged, classed and imbued with particular forms of cultural capital.

De Abaitua (2011) argues that the life outdoors, exemplified by camping, has long been ‘seen as a way of compensating for the enervations of urban life’ (p. 16) – wholesome, healthy and proper – a notion clearly embraced by much literature from the early twentieth century. For example, a spate of ‘camping and tramping’ novels was produced between 1930 and 1960 in the United Kingdom, celebrating the healthy outdoors and, following the restrictions of the First World War, a new social sensibility that leisure was

to be regarded as the right of all the people (Bird, 2014). All of this arose partially in parallel with the rise of the scouting movement, led by Baden Powell, in which young people learnt the skills for living outdoors responsibly, safely and under a moral code. The outdoor life was presented as good for you, and character-building.

Meanwhile in Scandinavian countries, practices like the Norwegian *friluftsliv* tradition emerged as a reaction to industrialisation and urbanisation, similar to other movements such as US-American Boy Scouts and National Park movements and German *Lebensreform* and *Wandervogel* movements. Distinct national cultures (labour movement, closeness to natural areas, good public transportation, everyman's rights, outdoor-focused school curriculums, national identity) have created distinct patterns of nature use in Scandinavia (e.g. Bigell, in press; Faarlund et al., 2007). For example, the first *recreationists* sleeping in a tent in the Finnish fells were a group of women in the 1930s and their willingness to do (wild) camping was inspired by the above-mentioned movements, as well as ideals of nation building and health (Kari, 1978). They needed to practice sleeping in a tent in their own home yard before heading to the fells. The tent weighed so much that they made a wagon out of an old baby buggy and some plywood, to carry it.

Indeed, we argue that there inheres a lightness, and a(n unbearable) heaviness to camping, both physical and metaphorical, often construed as a result of the extent to which the escape, simplicity and mobility ideals are pursued. According to Brooker and Joppe (2014), 'Camping has matured beyond its origins as an inexpensive, temporary sojourn in a rural environment, evolving into a highly fragmented niche tourism sector' (p. 1). In many countries in North America and Europe, where 'camping' was once a way to eschew home comforts in pursuit of the simple life, the practice has morphed into a way of mobilising the conveniences of home life – including televisions and mobile technologies, fridges, freezers, gas barbeques, power sockets from which to power hair straighteners – to places pre-organised for their easy and inexpensive accommodation; home away from home. Some arrive in motorhomes, others bring large tents, which unfold to reveal bedrooms, living spaces and kitchens (see Garst et al., 2013). Such systems are not, in general, transportable into 'wild places', 'wilderness' or 'rough' country, but yet still reduce everyday activity, including private life, to one only shielded from the gaze of others behind thin layers of canvas. Even so, the noises of disagreement, bodily functions and enthusiastic physical engagement are all too readily transmitted to the surrounding community of strangers at the campsite. It is private life lived publicly outdoors, to some extent.

Concomitantly, researchers have identified that there is a range of desired feelings experienced by the camping tourists. These include, for example, freedom to access isolated, natural sites and quieter and more self-sufficient leisure (Kearns et al., 2017) and *communitas* as the communal effervescence of momentary being-with others, particularly in extraordinary, marginal or liminal contexts (Varley, 2011). The desired feelings – *communitas*, a sense of shared values, feelings of escape and mutual openness on mass campsites (Bultena and Taves, 1961; Foster and McCabe, 2015; Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991; Yoon and Uysal, 2005) – lead to a sense of rejuvenation and well-being (Foley and Hayllar, 2007; Garst et al., 2013). While these research findings are interesting, in our enquiry we wish to contribute especially to the (almost non-existent) literature on wild

camping and to show that wild camping is much more than a form of nature-based special interest tourism (cf. Mikulić et al., 2017). Camping in wild places is always about the tensions between escaping and being embedded in global *and* everyday realities – for example, such as global inequalities and embodied practices of family life.

As indicated above, camping was (and is) historically about *mobility*, but it is also deeply rooted in *place* – an embodied, storied, remembered and routinised place. Place is inscribed with meaning for and by the nomadic practices of those who lived there and travelled through them, but it is also rich in a whole range of non-human meanings associated with stone, fire, ice, water and life. Indeed, as Hailey (2008) states tersely, ‘Camping begins with place’ (p. 1). The investigations considered here are concerned with portable, lightweight, self-sufficient ‘wild’ camping as a leisure pursuit, inspired during the development of Alpine climbing, pioneered by British mountaineers (Rouse, 1985), but also developed as a result of fabric technology advancement encouraged by world wars, the space race and military specification. It is this technological ‘lightness’ in the kit, which enables ever-more distant regions to be accessed, and greater journeys to be made, on foot. It is, however, a lightness, which carries with it the weight of industrialisation, the weight of capitalism and exploitation along with its affordances and benefits.

Going camping: methods and ontologies

Ethnomethodologically informed ethnography

We have searched for methodological inspirations that help in dealing with the mundane, sensory and emotional enactments of camping. Hence, rather than trying to interpret practices of wild camping as this or that and making them fit in different categories, we ‘engage in these practices at the outset’ (Hinchliffe, 2000: 580). Our concern is with the ways in which we ‘do’ going camping in the apparently wild, unmanaged places of nature (Roberts, 2015). In our effort to engage with the practices of camping, we take material interactions as a starting point. In other endeavours to reach complex social world(s), concentration on the actual interaction situations within data collection has been highlighted (Dirksmeier and Helbrecht, 2008; Jensen, 2015). Furthermore, when concentrating on the actual interaction (on the ontological practices in the everyday lives of the respondents), we should not consider the practices that we observe as representations of underlying ontology – but as performances that make worlds emerge through the relations that they are part of (Beard et al., 2016; Jensen, 2015).

Similar to Walsh and Tucker (2009), we are interested in how wild camping is constituted in the relations between wild campers and ‘with the ‘things’ or ‘non-humans’ in the world that surround them’ (Walsh and Tucker, 2009: 224). Hence, because of the specific material conditions of the wild camping, we see potential in the relational world of wild camping, where living creatures, materials and practices interact (Olafsdottir, 2013) – potential that can reveal global responsibilities for its practitioners, and for researchers. As researchers we should face the question of which realities we try to enact (Law and Urry, 2004) – and which orders or practices that are present and absent in tourism realities we choose to deal with (Jóhannesson et al., 2012).

In order to observe how tourism works and to engage in material interaction processes of wild camping, we employ ethnomethodologically informed ethnography (Laurier, 2008; Laurier et al., 2001; see also Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2013 on the term ethnomethodological ethnography). Ethnomethodology relies upon the deployment of mundane, taken-for-granted assumptions, knowledge and practices (Garfinkel, 1967; Pollner and Emerson, 2007). It emphasises the importance of becoming a skilled practitioner, a continuous ongoing reflexivity and descriptions of the lived order without confining the description to causal explanations or sociological conceptualisation (Pollner and Emerson, 2007). We call our ethnographic work ethnomethodologically informed, since we emphasise setting aside *a priori* explanations in order to focus on details of mundane camping practices and on the material interaction, which takes place within these practices (see also Laurier et al., 2001).

Rhythmanalysis

To grasp how the camping humans, the materiality in camping and the concepts related to camping are in relationship with each other and through their interaction constitute the reality of wild camping (Jensen, 2015); we add in our analysis a layer to the ethnomethodologically informed ethnography with elements from *rhythmanalysis* (Lefebvre, 2004). Becoming a *rhythmanalyst* resembles becoming a skilled practitioner, and as such may offer a rich additional nuance to the mundane practices of becoming a camping tourist. As Lefebvre describes it, you need to be a poet more than a scientist and turn the attention to the embodied experience of rhythm. Roberts (2015: 588) has described – by referring to Vannini and Taggart (2012) – this *rhythmanalytical* dwelling in a certain reality as an affective experience and practice that changes the reality from being a representation in our head to a set of tasks unfolding in front us.

Situating the researchers

Since the realities of wild camping are sketched here by exploring our mundane camping activities, engaged in during our personal histories as campers, what follows are our brief situational reflexive accounts. The first author spent her childhood in Southern Finland. Although her childhood neighbourhood was an urban one, cottage-life, berry picking, and playing in the woods were part of the everyday. However, she only became aware of the close relationship with nature as part of her when this sphere of life was missing – during the years she spent in North-West Spain and Dublin. Later she moved to Northern Finland and became an active outdoor hobbyist and outdoor guide. She worked as a wilderness guide, led a women's rafting club, camped regularly in the wild, and was engaged in kayaking and telemark-skiing. Nowadays, she camps regularly in Northern Finland and Norway with her husband and two small children.

The second author grew up in a Northern English household with a father who told tales of how he rock climbed in the 1950s, travelling to the mountains on his Matchless motorbike and sleeping in the doorways of Welsh chapels or else in hostels, with his climbing friends. The author's mother had been a Queen's Guide – the highest level of attainment in the Girl Guides movement in the United Kingdom. After personal (often

disastrous) experiences of backpacking and camping as a young lad in the Boy Scouts and then in Wales as a 20-year old, and rock climbing in the 1980s and 1990s, he shared with his wife and children a range of camping possibilities including car- and van-based trips and some lightweight expeditions in Scotland. Since then, in the past 20 years he has camped in the Karakorum in Northern Pakistan, in Spain, Greenland and France, and used sea kayaks, jeeps and rucksacks as transport for the materials of his outdoor living experiments. He now lives on the West Coast of Scotland with a runner/climber partner and their two-year-old son.

The quotations we present below come from field notes taken by the first author during a camping trip with her husband and children to Varanger Peninsula, Norway, in July 2015 and by the second author while camping with his son on the West Coast of Scotland in March 2016. Hence, we use camping with children – camping as a family – both as one methodological and analytical dimension in this article, since through our ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic research we have become to understand that camping as a family may illustrate the emergence of heaviness and lightness differently compared with camping solo. Freeman and Kearns (2015) have previously suggested that, for example, parents' and children's abilities to engage with nature differ remarkably between camping and home environments. By dwelling on our histories of becoming wild campers, and by leaning on our recent more detailed field notes, we next discuss the lightness and heaviness woven into the taskscapes of wild camping.

Lightness, heaviness and clearing

The lightness lessons/lessens in simplicity

First night in the tent. We are dwelling the green light – can you say that? We have green light all around us since our new tent is green, this summer's memories will be green!

(Varanger peninsula camping trip, July 2015)

The green tent can be referred to as a 'green camping kit', following Dant (1998: 79), who calls the collection of material things needed for windsurfing 'the windsurfing kit'. Similarly, the green camping kit consists of a new, light, green tent for four persons, four sleeping bags and four camping mattresses. This green camping kit ties the mundane practices of camping life to certain places and to certain ways of doing tourism. Indeed, as Walsh and Tucker (2009: 234) point out with referring to Star (1999) and Haraway (1992): 'objects, like bodies, are both boundary projects; they variously enable and constrain. Thus, the material objects of camping have "pushiness" towards something specific (Dant, 1998) and therefore the interaction we observe is specific'. First, this 'something' is illustrated by the limited space provided by the camping kit. Hence, the material development of the tent has evolved over time to accommodate the spatial compression, so that many have little taped loops from which to suspend a head torch, and net pockets to assist in the organisation of one's personal belongings. On the outside, the tent openings are merely zips in the fabric, so that when open, the overall shape and composition of the structure is compromised, punctured and the fabric flaps around. To overcome this, tents are made with other little loops to allow the rolled-up flap of

material to be secured out of the way, allowing a view from within and fresh air from without. Comforts that might be expected at 'home' must be crafted here; a sleeping bag is an all-round duvet after all, but it is unusual to carry a pillow in a rucksack. Instead, pillows are fashioned from sweaters and anything else, which comes to hand to allow some softness and head support.

The camping kit at once illustrates and resists the material conditions for being a tourist, as an aim of reducing complexity. Our field notes underline this simplifying quality of the camping kit in the form of descriptions of how the tent makes the environment more controllable – both because one has fewer things, and because the everyday practices become 'smaller'. Indeed, the everyday becomes smaller – and at once bigger. Going to the toilet is a performance in every sense. Likewise is the preparation of meals. Therefore, the obvious lightness of wild camping lies in the weight of the things we are able to carry with us into the wild. Furthermore, the simplicity tempts us to ask, if we can live with less:

Preparations. Usually, my mental organizing principles kind of work outward from the body – food, clothing (under – for warmth, outer – for protection from wind and rain) hats, socks, boots. Then cooking stuff, then sleeping stuff, then tent – are the pegs in (I once arrived to camp at a party and slept in the tent as a baggy, un-pitched envelope due to a lack of poles and pegs). Non-essential, or 'nice to have' additions like maps, binoculars, cameras come after.

(West coast camping trip, March 2016)

Perhaps the process of preparing for camping is part of the 'clearing' Heidegger (1997), Hailey (2008), Germann Molz (2014) and others have referred to: clearing as material practice of making place. We take for granted the material wherewithal for everyday life at home, in hotels or even in a caravan. In wild camping, it must all go on our back. It must be kept dry. It has to be simple. We need to carry it a substantial distance (not just ferry it out to the car). What we lack, we must do without. The focus is on basic things:

Clothing routines are also different when camping lightweight from a pack – often I will sleep in the undergarments worn on the trek, rather than changing into something specifically designated as nightwear. Hats are often worn, in order to conserve vital body heat. Socks, too, can add additional warmth if needed.

(West coast camping trip, March 2016)

Second, the simplicity related to the material objects of camping paves the way to an idea of less being more (Germann Molz, 2014). The rhythm of conducting daily practices in nature is cyclical and slow, and it invites the wild camper to a state of stillness (Rantala and Valtonen, 2014). The stillness is not absent of movement, but it is absent of linear, hectic everyday time. The camper reaches the stillness after few days in the camp, once the body gets used to the basic tasks unfolded and afforded by the material objects of camping – such as making food over fire, looking for water, packing and unpacking the rucksack. Slow movements, in general, can be seen as a counter-cultural response to

mass industrialisation and wild camping reflects the idea of slow movements since the idea of journey and becoming is more important than the idea of reaching a destination (Varley and Semple, 2015).

The third dimension afforded by the objects of camping could be described as an idea of nature that heals us. Recent research findings have shown the healing effects of being in nature – for example, even a short-term nature visit has proved to reduce stress levels (e.g. Tyrväinen et al., 2014). Furthermore, research on the positive healing impacts of berries and herbs is increasing (e.g. Rautio et al., 2007). Here, the idea of healing relates to the intensity of being in a relationship with the materialities of wild camping. The intensity wells from the need to attend to the materialities – if you do not take care of the materialities, they do not provide you with the shelter and comfort that is needed. Furthermore, the intense, embodied relationship enables us to perceive how our body reacts when it is moving along the rhythm of nature and forces us to listen to our own well-being – and that of our companions (Lefebvre, 2004). Olafsdottir (2013) suggests that the intense engagement in and with nature – in the context of nature-based tourism – brings feelings of relief and peace, once tourists are able to let go of the resource-based thinking of ‘gaining’ well-being. It can also affect how people think and relate to the world around them and encourage nurturing ecocentric relations (Olafsdottir, 2013).

In managing our being-towards things, campers must take the landscape as it is, more-or-less, in the moment of their arrival, but also acknowledging its rhythms, affordances and potential. By this, we mean that the site, first, is chosen. This choosing is an act of imagination, learning, experience and enskilment, as prevailing winds, temperatures, flows of darkness and light, proximity to water sources and shelter are weighed-up. That tree might serve as a place to hang food bags, or this bluff as our toilet area, or those rocks as additional anchorage. It is in this ‘clearing’ for camping that the freshness and freedom – the lightness – of the camp may be felt (Hailey, 2008). To be alone with one’s children, partner or friends in unmediated space and fresh clean air is precious. To remove the weight of endless digital connection, consumerism, television and motorised travel feels pure and good – but can also gnaw away at our conscience.

The heaviness

The green tent anchors me in the very moment; it anchors me in the open landscape of North-Norwegian peninsula, and in the windy and cold summer weather. I am awake in the night, trying to hear the breathing sound of my children who are lost in a deep, very deep sleep.

(Varanger peninsula camping trip, July 2015)

Half a year later, the fabric of the second author’s tent ties him similarly to the west coast of Scotland, on a cold windy night, searching for a head torch to check on his kid.

I awake at 4am, concerned for Charlie, simply as I am not sure where he is in the black space of the tent. I feel around in the dark, and can feel his body but cannot locate his head! I pad around with my hand on the floor of the tent above my head, feeling for the head torch. It is vaguely to hand, where I think I put it. The light reveals Charlie out of his sleeping bag, face on

the thin groundsheet, gently snoring. I shuffle him back in and hold him close – concerned that he may have lost body heat. I need not worry as he barely stirs.

(West coast camping trip, March 2016)

The tent membrane protects the family from the wind, but at the same time, ties us closely together, sharing the tiny space. Our field notes also point out that the tent affords the kids the unmediated, undistracted attention of their parents. The heaviness of being in this situation hits us in the above-described moments of night – be it dark or luminous – the heaviness of responsibility at hand. It is only us here, in the green or dark light, only us and the sound of wind. What if something happens – where is the security network we otherwise carry with us? Germann Molz (2014: 31) points out that camping reveals to us the could-be-otherwise-ness of what has seemed so solid – camping shows how contingent our social arrangements and material worlds are. These worlds afford security and confidence, but also constrain action and exploration as a result of their ‘weight’ – the heaviness of our dependence and insecurity. According to Germann Molz (2014: 31), the awareness of this contingency drifts away in everyday life, but becomes apparent in camping. She relates the idea of could-be-otherwise-ness to the unfinished, and towards emptiness. Here, instead, we relate the otherwise-ness to the metaphysical heaviness of camping.

The heaviness of camping comes in many forms. It reveals itself in the moment of being thoroughly worried about one’s family. It becomes obvious in the waste we produce – the empty tin cans we carry with us during the rest of the hiking trip, and all the way back home. Was it tuna fish, bought because it was so handy, but consumed with bad conscience? The materiality of camping, the way we are so closely engaged with the materialities, brings the absent realities to the present realities of camping (see Mol, 1999 and Jóhannesson, 2007, cited in Bærenholdt, 2012). Therefore, camping is rarely entirely free from the heavy responsibilities of the everyday, even if we might hope so. Instead, the everyday negotiation of responsibilities becomes revealed in camping practices, when alternative speeds and sensitivities are being provided (Barry, 2017: 341):

Bringing a seemingly fragile 18-month-old child for a trip on the wild west coast of Scotland in March added pressure – to ‘get it right’, to keep him warm and safe. In these wild and woolly conditions, wind and rain combine to rob the most rugged of adults of their body warmth, judgement, senses and life in landscapes like this. A mere toddler has less heat reserves and is far more vulnerable. My subconscious nags me. He will need good protective kit, and accessible calories to consume. And he is, at the best of times, ‘particular’ about food. But, we are only meandering a short distance away from home – to a deserted beach at the mouth of a stream as it flows into an open sea loch. I know there is some grass there, and that sea kayakers have camped there last year. But I have never even sat there.

(West coast camping trip, March 2016)

Did we really think that this ‘green camping kit’ could push us towards a lighter way of being, to conduct experiments in living? The playfulness of lightness of our being – the felt distance from daily duties created over a few days now seems fragile. And the

very privilege of this temporary freedom itself may press down as a heaviness in comparison with those not able to take ‘free’ leisure time to be a camping tourist; or those who may in fact be forced to live in a tent, not as a late-modern luxury but as a refuge. Indeed, contemporary camps are also tools for controlling migration and public exposure, and in these camps of control and necessity, the heaviness is present in forms of demobilisation and displacement (Hailey, 2009) – very much in opposition to our mobile nature of wild, ‘free’ camping as tourists.

The abstraction of heaviness is what Deleuze and Guattari, in various works including *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) and later others including Macauley (2005) in his *Elemental Philosophy* and Tim Ingold (2000, 2007, 2011) derive from the materiality that constitutes the boundaries of being, in balance with the lightness-through-absence metaphor that characterises philosophical hermeneutics (see also Zayani, 1999). In this sense, method revolves around ‘a particular ‘psychological act’ (Connolly and Keutner, 1988: 2), where the metaphors of heaviness and lightness, *An-wesenheit* and *Ab-wesenheit*, serve to portray the abstract play between the material weightiness that clothes the potentialities of being-in-the-world, and the lightness inherent to the process of remembering previous experience. There is a poetic balance in the powerful play between this heaviness and lightness.

Becoming a wild camper

We next try to bring together the lightness and heaviness, absence and presence, apparent in wild camping by using ‘clearing’ as a conceptual tool. Germann Molz (2014) refers via clearing to the unfinished nature of camping. Hailey (2008) describes clearing as movement that postpones the fixing of place and instead is a ‘letting happen’: clearing enables a place from which ‘something begins its essential unfolding’ (Heidegger, 1977: 332, cited in Hailey, 2008: 6). Furthermore, for Hailey the codes of camping have their origin in possibility. He sees camping as a practice of thresholding that involves thinking generally about how places might be constructed with disparate parts – materials and memories. The possibility that Hailey sees in camping could thus lie in how materials and memories come together in the present moment in wild places.

The coming together of materials and memories is evident, for example, in the moment of clearing (creating) a campground. The skill of anticipating the postures of a body in a sleeping bag, inside a tent, in the selected place – between the pine trees and roots, twigs and moss – requires embodied memories related to materialities of tent, sleeping bag, twigs and moss. Through the embodied, materially mediated memories a wild camper becomes increasingly enskilled in choosing and clearing the campground for setting the tent. According to Ingold (2011), there is a specific type of attunement in the enskilment: ‘Skilled handling of tools is anything but automatic, but is rather rhythmically responsive to ever-changing environmental conditions’ (p. 61). For Ingold and Mazzullo (2008), the enskilment is based on movement. Furthermore, they see Heidegger’s concept of clearing as a fixed one. To illustrate the movement, Ingold and Mazzullo (2008) discuss the Sámi people’s experience of dwelling in a *lávvu* (a tent) as open-ended and unbounded – as life lived *along* paths, not *in* places (pp. 30–32, italics in original). According to Ingold and Mazzullo (2008), ‘the Sámi is not confined within the

canvas skins (*loavdagat*) of the tent dwelling but is immanent in the meshwork of trails that take people around and about in the environment of the forest' (p. 36).

The idea of movement, as a part of clearing, exemplifies the dynamics between materials and memories. Wild camping cannot of course be compared or made parallel to the experience of dwelling of the Sámi people, which is woven into their livelihood and culture. Instead, Ingold's and Mazzullo's idea of movement is used here to illustrate how becoming a wild camper requires a honing of the skill of becoming attuned towards the life lived along paths. Moreover, becoming attuned towards the life along paths makes us attuned towards the present moment, and towards the world (Ingold, 2017). However, many tourists experience their wild camping only as a fleeting, temporary state, and the skills need regularly rehearsing:

As suggested above, by now I am wearily conscious of the poor state of my unpractised camp skills. I look out at packets of sausage filling with rainwater in the grass, the stove periodically popping and creating large orange balls of flame (the gas cylinder is at the wrong angle, I later realise). In the tent, sand from a previous trip mixes with damp clothes and sleeping bags tumbling in a disorderly mess. I have brought a pan, which does not sit properly on the stove, so I resort to boiling the sausages, and then adding them to *gnocchi* and baked beans.

(West coast camping trip 2016)

The tasks unfold in the mobilities and materialities of wild places require undivided and unrushed attention from us. Casey (2009) illustrates this:

Wild places themselves take the lead. However active and perceptive our bodies may be, they end up following this, tracing out the threads the wild world weaves before and around us. In the end – indeed, from the very beginning – we find ourselves respecting 'the lay of the land', or the setting of the sea. (p. 225)

In our notes, it is the rhythms of wild places and the (un)expected weather that takes the lead. This requires enskilment and attunement. The works of Cloke and Jones (2001, 2004) and of Ingold (2000) emphasise the situation of being-in (the situation of skilful practical absorption). Ingold, develops the idea of the 'taskscape' – as a landscape characterised by putting the relations which inhere in dwelling to work. We concur with Anderson and Harrison (2010), however, in challenging this depiction of landscape as primarily an expression of an already established situation; the tasking and tooling of an immanent world. We suggest that it is at this juncture that the rhythms and potentials of landscape collide with intention.

The attunement towards a life along paths can make us also aware of the importance of memory. Barry (2017) has recently discussed how research that involves assembling objects, routines and memories (e.g. packing a backpack) can reveal to us the ways in which tourists negotiate relationships in everyday practices. Similarly, camping can show us the role of memory in responsibility. In the wild camping trip, by being present with materialities and memories, we are along with our responsibilities towards a social and environmental world. We thus make these responsibilities very visible for our children by telling them how to behave and 'how to welcome the other' (Höckert, 2018)

– both the human and non-human other. In this way, becoming a camper has positive consequences since it requires responsibility from us – responsibility that Höckert describes as ‘a readiness to interrupt self as an individually responsible subject’, and which she invites to reach beyond humans (Höckert, 2018: 169). Becoming a camper invites us towards to being-with (Germann Molz, 2014) and being-along.

Clearing – as undoing – has positive consequences (Hailey, 2008). The hectic contemporary everyday makes us to strive for clearing that is not made possible in our everyday life. The cycles of wild camping – the search for site, the clearing of camping ground, the making of camp and breaking of camp (Hailey, 2008) – illustrate the undoing. Siting, clearing, making and breaking are repeated the next day, in a new place, the achievement of which is determined by the combination of weather and our enskilment. Camp constructed for one night is undone and redone in the next place. However, this undoing does not take place in emptiness – it takes place in wild places, with the particular affordances of wild places:

Again, in re-packing the tent, and now in far stronger winds than when it was pitched, I keep three pegs fixed in the ground, into the wind, until I am ready to bag it up and stuff it into the sack. Maybe I have learnt something over the years. But, once again, our haste means that the rucksack is poorly packed, if slightly better than the night before. Two water bottles dangle from straps outside the bag – a practice I am quietly critical of in others when I see these, or billycans, clanking along. It could be easy to lose stuff this way, it can be noisy, impede progress if scrambling amongst rocks. It is just, well... sloppy. And here I am doing just that. But in this short-camping experiment, it is ok. It works, and I can get both us and our bags over the river in one go, where we play leaning into the wind, jumping over deer poo and running downhill shouting ‘aye-up!’

(West coast camping trip, March 2016)

The weighty tensions of camping

Motifs of freedom, openness and naturalness contrast with the heaviness of global mass production and neoliberal economics, which conspire to make the wild camping trip possible for the modern tourist. Outdoor equipment with evocative names like ‘Wild Mountain’ often produced in sweatshop conditions somewhere else in the world, far from our untroubled romantic gaze contrast with the ideals of self-sufficiency, local placefulness and do-it-yourself creativity of earlier camping eras. Likewise, the foods we consume at camp – satisfyingly creative, tasty and healthy – have often travelled thousands of food miles, are wrapped in plastic and embody labour, carbon and the troubled weight of humankind. Where is the lightness of simplicity, then?

Do not be in a hurry to spend money on new inventions. Every year there is put upon the market some patent knapsack, folding stove, cooking utensil, or camp trunk and cot combined; and there are always for sale patent knives, forks, and spoons all in one, drinking cups, folding portfolios, and marvels of tools. Let them all alone: carry your pocketknife, and if you can take more let it be a sheath or butcher knife and a common case knife.

(Gould and Jordan, 1871: 2)

The 'heaviness' of camping is also pleasurable, and satisfying – following Ingold's ideas of enskilment in our ability to effect clearing and create camp, live in it and share it with others. The mass of requisite equipment, which is disgorged from the bulging rucksack, includes surprises – material to support and tricks and techniques learnt along the way, such as old film containers filled with spices and herbs to enliven meals under canvas, or a miniature coffee percolator. Dealing with aspects of the heaviness still yields creativity at times, and suggests possibility for new ways to be outdoors, to be a tourist and to be towards place and other humans. It is our clearing and lightness. Beyond imperatives for growth, productivity, expansion, colonisation, the heaviness perhaps suggests that self-sufficiency is just that: we are enough and simplicity is pleasing for all its heaviness. Camping is thus light *and* heavy. Hence, the wild camping illustrates the weight of tourism – a weight that is present even when we travel 'light'. Perhaps, after all, tourism is not about escaping the weight of everyday but instead about becoming attuned towards the everyday in which we are engaged. The distance we create – be it by travelling to wild places or luxurious destinations – unfolds the possibility to make visible the 'meshwork of trails' in our life.

'Lightweight' camping as reflexive practice

A physically cumbersome pack, once stuffed with all of the things the wild camping tourist feels they will need, is ontologically unsettling and physically weighs them down. It loads a heaviness upon their backs and their souls. There are concerns about one's ability to carry the stuff, particularly if it is the first trip for months, and the heaviness of the responsibility to act appropriately, to keep selves and perhaps others safe and provided-for in places where there will be 'nothing'. Yet these practices also deliver a feeling of immense lightness. It is the lightness of letting-go, of making do with the material affordances available from what we have. It is simple. Such activities, caught betwixt and between the lightness and heaviness of the pursuit, effect new spaces for clearing, as versions of 'home', the antithetical place of tourism and hospitality (for tourism places are, by definition, not 'home', but may pretend to be so). The tent is home remade, in the contours of a landscape which has not been rationalised for settling, dwelling, pitching. Camping also requires the ontological clearing to allow the materiality of the everyday to be re-created among the rocks, tussocks and trees, and among the cares and concerns of the camper(s).

Through the lightness and heaviness of wild camping, we can observe how the absent and present realities come together in tourism: we are anchored in the materialities and social responsibilities even as we are escaping. However, through the concept of clearing we have aimed to show here how we can be along and be with – that we are not escaping to emptiness but towards responsible ways of being along with others, close at hand. Furthermore, the lightness in wild camping paves way for attunement towards the heaviness. It is in the attunement towards the heaviness that the possibilities exist for being along with the responsibilities towards others. Through having less around us, we can become aware of the weight of the people, things and nature around us. Furthermore, through concentrating on the 'micro-geographies' (Olafsdottir, 2013: 228) of wild camping we, as researches, can aim to better observe what kind of realities we engage with in our research. What actually are the many tensions of how tourist experiences are

co-curated by material objects and the production processes? Here, we have aimed to reach this awareness through ethnomethodologically informed exploration and detailed description of how people do being a camper, and suggest that this approach could be applied to explore how people do being tourists in various contexts.

By applying the rhythms of the outdoors and considerations of mobile materiality to other tourism contexts, we may be afforded new perspectives. For example, the significance of untidiness and messiness, along with our ability to remodel, simplify, strip-out our lives for a moment or two as tourist-campers is significant. Heaviness is inescapable – global capitalism and the effects of neoliberalism insist that the things we use are more distant from us (we are more alienated from them and from others in the production process) as we find our tents made in Asian sweatshops and our food transported halfway around the world in support of our ‘simple’ experiences in nature. Little in tourism allows for our clearing or extemporisation, as spaces and places are often presented as finished, complete. Destinations often strive for brands, which have reducible, fixed meanings representable in advertisements and promotions. However, in wild camping, we ‘build’ place, making and shaping place via affordances and materialities, recorded and learnt as memory and narrative.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Jennie Germann Molz and the two referees for their insightful and helpful comments.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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